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Editor: R. Palme Dutt

H-Bomb, Labour and Communism * R.P.D

Election Prospects * D. N. Pritt, Q.C.

Four-and-a-half per cent * Maurice Dobb

From Bangkok to Bandung * Ivor Montagu

Now Isn't That Just Too Bad? * Andrew Rothstein

Olive Schreiner * Michael Harmel

April, 1955

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INFLEXIBLE PURPOSE

WHEN a Kent reader sent us back numbers of LABOUR MONTHLY, I could not bring myself to put those of 1945 aside. They weren't complete, so I reached the bound volume off our shelves and became engrossed. Here was an M.P., writing in L.M. just ten years ago: 'The greatest barrier to international co-operation and the indirect cause of this war was the cold-shouldering of Russia after the last one'. Another in the same issue—now a Tory peer—insisted 'there must be regular and frequent consultations between Prime Minister, President and Marshal'. Twelve other public figures of varying views explained why each supported the decisions of the Crimea Conference which the House of Commons had just approved by 413 votes to 0. Remember what Churchill had signed? 'It is our inflexible purpose to destroy German militarism and Nazism,' 'to disarm and disband all German armed forces; break up for all time the German General Staff that has repeatedly contrived the resurgence of German militarism. . . .' Six months later, on the very eve of the General Election, Mr. Attlee put his hand to even more precise undertakings in Berlin, including the guarantee that: 'German militarism and Nazism will be extirpated and the Allies will take in agreement together, now and in the future, the other measures necessary to assure that Germany never again will threaten her neighbours or the peace of the world.' It is not the British people who have changed. As they rouse themselves to demonstrate *their* 'inflexible purpose' for peace, those who would lead them backward are headed for the scrap heap.

Yes, that little 1945 volume gives food for thought—and ammunition for the peace fight in 1955, with another election ahead. Despite the cramped condition of wartime publishing L.M. then provided all the facts and guidance to enable us to form a true judgment in the difficult war years. Today, as an *Essex* reader writes: *'It seems that the more difficult the time the more do we need some assessment of events, which the* L.M. *does so excellently.'* Today, writes a Norfolk reader: *'I believe that the American madmen are working up to a "preventive" war, no doubt with all set and even now waiting for the code word, and that British leaders are following on behind.'* What can that code word be but Treason—treason to mankind? He adds: *'Anyway,* L.M. *couldn't put things more clearly and doesn't miss a move.'* Today, writes a Scot: 'L.M. *continues to be a guide and reliable source of information, helping all who read it to form sound opinions on the present dramatic world situation.'* That is also the verdict from overseas: from the *Israeli* who values our *'Marxist analysis of world politics with the international situation as it is today'*, to the *Canadian*, who finds *'all your articles tops, and very timely, in this confused and chaotic period we are living through. R.P.D. puts his finger on it all the time'*. Even the 1945

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Notes of the Month

H-Bomb, Labour and Communism

'So long as they had capitalist governments they could not trust them with armaments even though they might say that those armaments were not intended to be used. When Labour came to power . . . their first duty would not be that of reducing the Army in order to increase the Navy, or reducing the Navy in order to increase the Air Force, or reducing the Air Force in order to increase the Gas Bombs.'

Rt. Hon. C. R. ATTLEE, Labour Party Conference, June, 1923.

THE battle which has opened in the Labour Party with the expulsion of Aneurin Bevan from the parliamentary party, and the consequent implicit offensive against every section of the advancing left in the working-class movement, is itself only a reflection of the deeper battle which has opened for the whole future of Britain over the decision to enter on the suicidal strategy of a hydrogen bomb war. All the questions of our time are here gathered into a single knot. It is a characteristic feature of the hydrogen bomb that its accompanying effects and after effects can be even more devastating and far-reaching than the immediate explosion. Up to the present the hydrogen bomb has only been exploded in experimental tests. But the first effects have already led to the most

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considerable explosion in the Labour Party since the crises of the 1931 split of the leadership and the 1939 Popular Front expulsions. The revolt of 62 Labour M.P.s refusing to vote for the official motion endorsing the hydrogen bomb was an initial indication of the extent of the opposition among the widest sections of the people to a strategy of annihilation. The answering offensive of the Right Wing Executive, hurling its thunderbolt of excommunication at Aneurin Bevan as the most prominent spokesman of dissent, has brought into the open the crisis reaching from the top to the bottom of the Labour Party. The battle is joined. Not the battle over one man or over the interpretation of mechanical discipline. But the battle of policy. The battle for the future of Labour and for the survival of Britain.

Nuclear Politics

Since the Government's White Paper of February and the Premier's speech of March announcing the decision to manufacture and use the hydrogen bomb as the heart and kernel of Britain's strategy, and since the bi-partisan endorsement of that policy by official Labour, the effects of this deadly step will more and more visibly overshadow every aspect of economic and political life. The crisis in the Labour Party is only the beginning of the repercussions in the political field. Since that decision nothing will be the same again in Britain. The problem of the hydrogen bomb, at the centre of the entire international situation, is most sharp for Britain. Hence in this fateful moment we have now reached it will be necessary to examine: first, the question of the hydrogen bomb and Britain's strategy; and second, and in the light of this, the crisis in the Labour Party, and the problems of the advancing left and of the fight for the future of Britain.

I. H-Bombastes Furioso

The decision to manufacture, use, and use first in the event of major war (the qualification 'against aggression' is meaningless, since all wars waged by British imperialism are invariably, by definition, 'against aggression') is the most serious decision that has been taken in Britain since the end of the second world war. It is true that this is 'only' the sequel of the previous decision of the Attlee Labour Government to receive the American atom bombers in Britain, to make Britain an American atom bomber base, and to initiate the manufacture of atom bombs in Britain. But the differ-

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ence in magnitude is so great as to render impossible the previous policy of ignoring and hushing up the deadly significance of the earlier decisions, and to compel the grim prospect before Britain to be brought into the light of day. Like the earlier decisions to make Britain an American atom bomber base and to manufacture the atom bomb, so the decision to manufacture the hydrogen bomb and initiate thermo-nuclear war has been taken without pretence of consultation of the wishes of the people.* No voter in 1945 dreamed that he was voting for the American military occupation of Britain. No voter in 1951 had the slightest inkling that he was voting for Britain to enter on the strategy of a hydrogen bomb war. Over the pettiest question of a penny on or off the purchase tax the constitutional system will encourage the most solemn and elaborate discussion as to whether there was or was not an electoral mandate. But over the key questions that determine the life or death of the people there is no pretence of an electoral mandate. There is no suggestion of consulting the wishes of the people. Such is the peculiar operation of the 'democratic' system in Britain.

Apology for Crime

The hydrogen bomb is a horror weapon for the mass extermination of tens of millions of innocent men, women and children ('the power of these weapons is such that accuracy of aim assumes less importance', as the White Paper blandly remarks). Its further consequences of destruction and devastation are still being only dimly explored by scientists. It must be obvious to every sane human being that advocacy of war with such weapons is a crime. Any statesman who advocates such war is in the strictest and most literal sense a war criminal. It is the universal desire of every decent man and woman that such weapons should be banned. Such prohibition was the universal reaction of the powers to dum-dum bullets. Such prohibition was the universal reaction of the powers to poison gas. Such prohibition was the universal reaction of the powers to germ warfare—though here the United States refusal to ratify the convention banning it was the first significant foretaste of the new era. These prohibitions have in general been kept (with the exception of the American use of germ warfare in Korea; but here the strategy had already been proclaimed by the refusal to ratify the convention

*The *Economist* of March 5 reported that newspaper offices have been 'flooded by letters of protest against the decision' (on the hydrogen bomb). The Archbishop of York on March 15 stated that he had been inundated with letters calling for the prohibition of the hydrogen bomb. There is no question of the overwhelming feeling of every section of the people on this question, nor would there be any doubt of the result if a referendum were taken on the desirability of a ban on atomic and hydrogen weapons.

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and by the repeated public declarations of the Chiefs of the U.S. Chemical Corps). Why, then, the refusal to apply the same method of prohibition to the menace of the atom bomb and the hydrogen bomb? Why have the Western powers, after initiating the use of such weapons, steadily voted down, year after year, during all these ten years, every Soviet proposal to ban such criminal weapons? The refusal might appear the more extraordinary, since it is admitted that the Western countries, with their concentrated industrial populations, are the most vulnerable to such weapons. To unravel the answer to this question, the key question of post-war international politics, it is necessary first to clear away a thick rubbish heap of contradictory legends, myths and distortions behind which it is endeavoured to conceal the harsh reality of this criminal policy. The truth is indeed buried at the bottom of a well—an inkwell of printed lies, sophistries and White Papers.

Contradictory Arguments

Dr. Johnson defined the system of Roman Catholicism and its Inquisition as 'defending nonsense by violence'. The modern Western arguments offered to the public in favour of atomic and hydrogen war may be defined as 'defending violence by nonsense'. Sir Winston Churchill's speech of March 1 will be treasured by future historians as a museum piece which succeeded in embalming simultaneously in one grand utterance all the contradictory myths, strategic illusions and non-sequiturs which have ever been uttered on this subject for the past ten years. During the earlier years, while the shock of Hiroshima was still fresh, the Western powers pretended to be in favour of a ban in principle, but to criticise the Soviet proposals for inspection as insufficient to make the ban effective. This hypocritical pretence has long been abandoned (though even this hoary relic was also duly disinterred in Sir Winston's speech) in favour of the more up-to-date plea that a ban on atomic and hydrogen weapons would be a Communist trap to rob the West of their best weapons and ensure Soviet superiority. Sure enough, Sir Winston used both arguments in rapid succession. Now it is possible to argue that the Western powers passionately desire a ban on nuclear weapons, if only adequate inspection could be ensured to make it effective. Alternatively, it is possible to argue that a ban on nuclear weapons would be fatal to the Western powers since it would rob them of their most treasured weapons of supposed superiority. But to use both arguments simultaneously can only arouse in the most benevolent hearer a suspicion that both argu-

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ments are insincere, and that the only reality is the N.A.T.O. decision to prepare thermo-nuclear war. For this sublime aim any old argument that can be fished out of the ragbag is offered with the bland assurance of sales-talk patter to bemuse the customer.

Perfectionism

As a side-line for the progressively-minded public, the argument is offered in favour of atomic and hydrogen bomb war that the only alternative is, not a ban on these weapons, but complete disarmament, the abolition of all weapons, the abolition of war, the millenium, etc., and that, until this goal is achieved, thermo-nuclear war must be supported. This is the old device of perfectionism, long familiar in the labour movement. If the workers strike for higher wages, oppose a rent increase or demand the repeal of an iniquitous tax, the perfectionist could always be found somewhere in a corner wisely explaining that 'only socialism' is the true solution; therefore meanwhile let the capitalists and landlords have their own sweet way. Hence the perfectionist, claiming to be 'much more left than you, brother', has long been smoked out and recognised by all militant fighters as the ally of reaction. This device has been worked overtime of late to obstruct a ban on atomic and hydrogen weapons. Mr. Attlee valiantly nailed his colours to the mast at the beginning of February and proclaimed 'the only safeguard' against world destruction to be the abolition of all weapons 'from the rifle to the hydrogen bomb'; until then, so long as there are rifles in the world, Britain must have atomic and hydrogen bombs and use them in the event of major war. General MacArthur announced at Los Angeles on January 26 that the only solution was 'to abolish war'; let the United States lead; 'there must always be one to lead, and we should be that one' (presumably a hint at the old ultra-imperialist dream of American world hegemony). Meanwhile the perfectionists support the preparations for thermo-nuclear war.

Bogy ! Bogy !

Since all normal peace-loving people are horrified at the prospect of the hydrogen bomb, it is necessary to intimidate them into support by brandishing suitable spectres as the supposed alternative. So the old Red Spectre and Bolshevik bogy is duly disinterred from the cupboard and furbished up anew in startling colours. Sir Winston, after his short dalliance with peace-mongering election speeches, returned to the theme of Fulton and surpassed it. The Russian hordes ('Mongol hordes' were referred to by him in a little

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historical excursion which conveniently forgot the role of Russia as the outpost of Europe in those ancient struggles) were once again depicted as preparing to swoop down over all Europe to the Atlantic and the Channel; only nuclear weapons hold them at bay. The irony of this picture from the original organiser of Western anti-Soviet aggression, and still today publicly glorying in that record of aggression, is evident. But it is doubtful whether he believes his own legend. Every statesman and responsible political observer of every colour has long recognised that the socialist countries want peace above all. This is an elementary fact of the international situation.

A Dulles Come to Judgement

The myth of the 'Russian hordes about to swoop' has been the invariable stock in trade to cover Western anti-Soviet aggression. It was the favourite theme of Hitler to cover his aggressive aims. It is repeated by the leaders of the Atlantic Axis in almost identical terms. But in their saner moments every Western statesman without exception, when temporarily forgetting propaganda, has recognised that 'Russia does not want war'. Take Dulles:

> So far as it is humanly possible to judge, the Soviet Government, in the conditions now prevailing, does not contemplate the use of war as an instrument of its national policy.
>
> I do not know any responsible high official, military or civilian, in this government or any government who believes that the Soviet state now plans conquest by open military aggression. . . .
>
> It cannot be assumed that the Soviet state would not use the Red Army if its leaders felt that their homeland was imminently and seriously menaced.
>
> That is why the United States should not seek military bases so close to the Soviet Union as to carry an offensive threat that is disproportionate to its defensive value.
>
> (John Foster Dulles, address to the Third National Conference on 'Churches and the World Order,' March 8, 1949.)

But the United States has established those bases—potential aggressive bases ringing the Soviet Union and China. If there is to be question of the menace of aggression, it is the Soviet Union, not the West, that has the right to speak of that menace. Yet, in the face of ceaseless provocation, which in former times could have long ago led to war (including ceaseless military violation of frontiers, dropping of armed agents, etc.), the Soviet leaders have kept their heads, and press only for peace, negotiation and the banning of weapons of mass destruction.

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Arms and Man-Power

Nevertheless, pursue the advocates of the atom bomb and the hydrogen bomb, in face of the overwhelming military and numerical superiority of those Russians, with their swarming population, and all China beside them, how can we poor little, virtually disarmed, nations of the West hope to protect ourselves except by these magic press-button weapons of mass destruction with which the super-scientific and intellectual and technological superiority of our civilisation over those Russian barbarians has equipped us? We don't like the idea of nuclear war, they insist; but these nuclear weapons are our shield, our buckler, our salvation. They are 'the Great Deterrent'. With them we feel safe. This argument has more holes than a sieve. The myth about the supposed overwhelming superiority of the Soviet Union and its allies in 'conventional' armaments and man-power is for popular consumption only, like the parallel myth about the 'hordes ready to swoop'. Whenever even the Western experts have to deal with facts instead of propaganda, a different picture emerges. The Atlantic Powers officially claim seven millions armed forces; even the White Paper, out of a prodigious imagination without evidence, only dares to suggest six millions for the armed forces of the Soviet Union and its European allies; and this figure can be regarded with justifiable suspicion, in view of past proved fantastic exaggerations and self-contradictory assertions from these quarters. The Soviet Union alone has reduced its armed forces to the pre-war level (admitted by General Bradley to Congress in 1953, with the subsequent statement of Montgomery in May, 1954, that the Soviet armed forces had shown no increase between 1947 and 1954), and its arms expenditure to a lower proportion of its budget than pre-war. The Atlantic Powers, beginning from an arms expenditure far above pre-war or the pre-war proportion of the budget, officially boast to have more than trebled it within three years.

Numerical Superiority?

As for the supposed numerical superiority of 'swarming populations', hard facts again unfortunately explode the myth. The socialist world is just over one-third of mankind: 900 millions out of 2,500 millions, or a minority. A goodly minority, but a minority. The precious 'free world' claimed by the Western rulers contains 1,600 millions, or what would be a decisive numerical majority—if it were a 'free world'. Hitler made the same claim of an imaginary

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numerical inferiority confronted with 'swarming Russian hordes' to explain away his military defeats. The boot was on the other foot. Hitler had the life and labour of the 400 millions of Europe from the Channel to the Soviet border at his command against the 200 millions of the Soviet Union. But the Soviet people won, despite the odds and superior numbers against them, because they were a socialist people, a new phenomenon in human history, as Engels had foretold, fighting and working as one for their own country which they owned, for their socialist fatherland, against the slaves of Nazi dictatorship; because the military skill of their generals and soldiers out-manœuvred the Nazis; because Soviet artillery smashed the supposed invincible Nazi blitzkrieg (which was itself only the prototype of the new atomic and hydrogen bomb blitzkrieg imagined by the White Paper).

They Fear People

There is, however, a very real and serious meaning in this ceaseless anxiety of the Western rulers about their numerical inferiority and shortage of man-power. Once this reality is understood, in place of all the myths with which they seek to conceal it, we shall come closer to the understanding of their addiction to mass-destruction nuclear warfare as their ideal. On paper, the Western rulers have the majority. They have 1,600 millions in their so-called 'free world'. But in reality they know that they have not got them, because they know that their 'free world' is not free. They know that the overwhelming majority of their 'free world' live in colonial or semi-colonial countries and are in revolt against them. They know that all Asia and Africa is against them. They know that Latin-America is stirring. They know that their own workers in Europe, in France, in Italy, in Britain and in Germany, are bitterly opposed to them and to all their war plans for reviving Nazi militarism and for an American war of 'liberation' against socialism, and will resist such a war with all their strength. Therefore the Western rulers are indeed in a minority; they are a tiny, tiny minority against all mankind; and they know it. Therefore all their dreams go out to the vision of marvellous magic horror machines which can compensate for their numerical inferiority; which by the pressing of a lever can exterminate tens and scores and hundreds of millions of human beings and save their power. *The Hydrogen Bomb has become the Holy Grail of the last stage of imperialism in its death agony.*

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'Frightfulness'

They call it the 'Great Deterrent'. There was a more familiar term for that during the first world war. *'Schrecklichkeit'*. 'Frightfulness'. Hitler's gas-chambers were also intended as a 'Great Deterrent'. 'The more frightful, the better.' 'Terrorise to conquer.' 'Peace through Strength.' But then why not Germ Warfare? The same argument applies. Why the pretended pious horror at the publication of the deadly facts of the American actions in Korea? But indeed the United States has already drawn the logical conclusion. It was the U.S. representative in the United Nations, Ernest Gross, who in June, 1952, poured scorn on the Geneva convention banning germ warfare as 'a dead treaty' and 'of interest only to historians'. It is the official Chiefs of the U.S. Chemical Corps who openly proclaim the aims of bacteriological warfare:

> The weapons—biological and radiological—which we have under development may provide an opportunity at the smallest logistical cost to reduce an enemy's ability to resist. . . . Germ warfare must be an asset.
>
> (Brig.-Gen. Creasy, General Commanding U.S. Army Chemical Corps Research and Engineering Command, speech in Washington to American Women's Patriotic Conference, January 25, 1952.)

> The Army is shifting from the research to the manufacturing stage in bacteriological weapons and will nearly double the size of its Bacteriological Warfare centre as part of the new emphasis on germ warfare. These facts came to light yesterday in Congressional testimony. . . . Testimony given behind closed doors by Maj.-Gen. E. T. Bullene, Chief of the Army Chemical Corps, and just made public, tells of the importance placed on bacteriological warfare in current Army plans.
>
> (*Washington Post*, April 3, 1952.)

The deadly logic runs. Try substituting 'germ warfare' for the 'hydrogen bomb' in the White Paper, Churchill's speech or any other official statement, and the argument of the 'deterrent' (*i.e.*, frightfulness) will run with exactly the same logic. Suicidal? No doubt. So is the hydrogen bomb admitted to be. 'Better Annihilation than Communism' becomes the final motto of a dying class.

Descent to Hell

A recent enquiry has revealed that the majority of the British people no longer believe in hell after death (*Observer*, March 13, 1955). Why should they? They live in the age of the atom bomb and the hydrogen bomb. The mediæval preacher's sublimest efforts to depict the horrors of eternal flames pale before the most commonplace present-day scientific description of the effects of the hydrogen bomb. The obsolete 'deterrent' of the mythological prospect of hell

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after death has lost its terrors when imperialism already creates hell upon earth. Aneurin Bevan, in explaining why he has so far supported the hydrogen bomb, but only criticised the strategy of its use first against an enemy not using it, stated:

> Those of us who concurred in the making of the atom bomb and tolerated the saturation bombing of the last war have no moral or logical case against the hydrogen bomb.
>
> (Aneurin Bevan. *News Chronicle*, March 9, 1955.)
>
> I cannot see that there is any logical difference between the hydrogen bomb and the atom bomb. . . . Nor, indeed, can I see any difference, except scientifically and technically, between the two of them and saturation bombing, which is also indiscriminate slaughter of human beings. They are all immoral.
>
> (Aneurin Bevan, House of Commons, March 2, 1955.)

They are also all, he might have added, an indisputable violation of international law and come under the category of War Crimes as defined by the Nuremberg Tribunal. But the conclusion which he draws of supposed inevitable complicity in the deepening descent in crime is not the conclusion to which his facts point. For what stands out in the facts he cites is that all the war crimes he cites stem from Western imperialism. Saturation bombing of civilians, whether of Coventry or Dresden; Hitler's gas chambers; the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; and now the decision to use the hydrogen bomb in any future major war—all these are the product of Western imperialism. Never from the side of socialism. The Soviet Union is the only great power in the second world war that fought war, and the most terrible war any nation had to face, with clean hands. The menace to the survival of humanity comes from Western imperialism alone. That menace now reaches its climax with the hydrogen bomb—if the peoples of the West do not act in time to change their rulers and the policy of their rulers.

Strategic Bombing

We can never afford to forget that, just as it was British imperialism which used to boast of having invented the system of concentration camps in the South African War (denounced at the time by the old Liberal leader, Campbell Bannerman, a very different type of Leader of the Opposition from the present type, as 'methods of barbarism'), so it is the British imperialists, as Bomber Harris never failed to insist, who invented the system of 'strategic bombing', *i.e.*, mass destruction of civilians, men, women and children, as the supposed supreme strategy for war.

> No other country in the world had at that time conceived the possibility of using an Air Force in this way, to fight a war by itself and within

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certain limits win a war outright. The French believed that bombers could only be used to serve as long-range artillery for the army. . . . The Germans completely subordinated the whole air force to the land operations of a continental army. . . . The Russians never seriously attempted strategic bombing. The Japanese entirely subordinated their air force to the operations of their army and navy. . . . The United States had not originally visualised the use of aircraft in any but a close strategical-tactical role. . . . The R.A.F. was using air power strategically in Iraq in 1922.

(Air Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, *Bomber Offensive*, 1947, p. 53.)

True enough. And it was the first Labour Government of 1924 which won the glory of maintaining and publicly defending the policy of bombing in Iraq. But the experience of the second world war dealt a shattering blow to the British and subsequently Anglo-American theory of 'strategic bombing' (mass murder of civilians) as the ideal path to quick victory in war. Professor Blackett has shown how 1.4 million tons of bombs were dropped on Germany during the war, or the equivalent of 700 atom bombs or 14 hydrogen bombs, without succeeding in bringing down German production or breaking morale; it was the fighting of the Soviet armies that had to play the decisive part in smashing the Nazi armies. The same truth, that there is no magic push-button strategy of victory, that war in the last resort is decided by people, would be demonstrated anew if the Western powers dared to launch their atomic and hydrogen bomb war.

Fallacy of Nuclear Superiority

And it is here that arises the final insanity of the entire strategy of the White Paper, of Sir Winston Churchill's speech, and of all the supporters of the Hydrogen Bomb as the 'Great Deterrent'. The theory of 'strategic bombing', as Bomber Harris correctly showed, was originally evolved for use against colonial peoples, unarmed peoples or peoples with only primitive weapons, as the cheapest way of subduing them with relatively little cost or casualties for the victorious representatives of 'civilisation'. It may be noted that the only casualties so far of the atom bombs and of the hydrogen bomb experiments have been Asians. The theory of 'strategic bombing' is always based on the grand one-way assumption that the Great Strategist is at the delivering end, not at the receiving end. Against a Power of equal development the theory breaks down. Hence the entire strategy of the White Paper and of Sir Winston Churchill's speech has to be based on the bland assumption of Western nuclear superiority. Churchill assumed three to four years of such superiority, during which the West must impose its terms on the basis of

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its supposed superior strength. It is obvious that the logic of this, if it were followed out, would point, like Fulton, straight to a preventive war. But in fact the Western strategists know the assumption to be false. Eisenhower and Gruenther at once repudiated Churchill's imaginary period of superiority. For the facts are the opposite. When Molotov stated on February 9 that 'with respect to hydrogen weapons, the United States and not the Soviet Union is among those who are lagging behind', he made a statement not to be treated lightly, any more than his previous statement on the atom bomb in 1947. The Western powers took two years to recognise the truth of Molotov's statement of 1947. They will have to recognise the truth of the new statement sooner; for the facts of the explosions of 1952, 1953 and 1954, and of Soviet priority in the field are already widely known.

Soviet 'Great Deterrent'

For the moment the Western strategists and publicists may try to bluff it out. But they are on a losing wicket. *There is no Western nuclear superiority.* Once that fact is recognised, the entire strategy of the White Paper, of the so-called 'Great Deterrent' collapses. It is the Soviet hydrogen bomb that is the true 'Great Deterrent', because its existence compels the Western strategists to hesitate before embarking on the desperate hazard of a hydrogen bomb war, to which they know their countries would be the more vulnerable. The Soviet hydrogen bomb is the true 'Great Deterrent', because it is accompanied, not by proclamations of the intention to wage thermonuclear war, but by the demand for the abolition and banning of all such weapons. The Soviet hydrogen bomb is the most powerful weapon for the abolition of hydrogen bombs. Once the Western powers have to abandon their illusion of superiority, their whole system of mailed-fist diplomacy, of refusing to negotiate, of dreams of imposing their terms by supposed superior strength ('peace through strength') will have to be abandoned, and give place to real negotiation, negotiation between equals, for the abolition of weapons of mass destruction, for the reduction of international tension, for peaceful settlements, for co-operation in place of the confrontation of opposing military coalitions. The only alternative would be a war of limitless destruction, in which in the end, whatever the ordeals through which humanity would have to pass, the Western imperialists—for the peoples of the entire world are against them—could only lose. That is the desperate alternative to which the most

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crazy, reckless, aggressive war-making sections of imperialism turn: to which the strategy of the White Paper in fact points. That is the strategy expressed in the slogan 'Rather Annihilation than Communism'—the motto of a dying class.

The Madman's Throw

Therein is the actual menace of the present situation. It is the menace of the desperate mad gambler's throw on the part of the rulers of the dying Western imperialist camp, in the face of all facts, sanity and reason, choosing the reckless hazard of a hydrogen bomb war, because they know and have seen that the continuance of peace means everywhere the ceaseless inevitable advance of the peoples to liberation, to socialism, to communism. Sir Winston Churchill in his speech on March 1 declared:

> I must make one admission, and any admission is formidable. The deterrent does not cover the case of lunatics. . . . That is a blank.

In the subsequent debate Tom Driberg correctly pointed out:

> The only senior statesman in East or West in recent years who has been what could be described as a certifiable lunatic was not a Russian, or a German, or a European, but an American, who had held high executive position in the United States at a crucial time when the strategy and policy of the United States were being worked out.

The significance of the Forrestal case was not merely the last moment when, already under restraint, and, hearing a fire engine he screamed that the Russians had arrived, and leaped to his death from a window. The significance was that he had already been mad before the final climax, and he had been in charge of the highest strategy of the United States, and no one had noticed anything wrong. The N.A.T.O. policy of the avowed aim of preparing thermo-nuclear war, combined with the N.A.T.O. atmosphere of rabid anti-Soviet anti-Communist hysteria, places the levers of command in the hands of those who at a moment's notice can launch their thermo-nuclear war without the slightest say of the peoples in the decision at the moment of crisis. Their hands must be tied now before it is too late. It is now that the fight must be fought to destroy and ban all atomic and hydrogen weapons, and to compel negotiation for peace. That is why the crisis in the Labour Party takes on such supreme importance at the present moment. It is against this background that the present crisis in the Labour Party, arising directly from the question of the hydrogen bomb, coupled with the question of Nazi rearmament and the whole war policy, takes on the character, not merely of an internal affair within the

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Labour Party, of the struggle of rival policies and sections, of left and right, but of a battle for the whole future of Labour, for the existence of Britain and for the future of world peace.

II. The Crisis in the Labour Party

In vain the Grand High Purgers of Transport House seek to explain away the crisis in the Labour Party as 'only' a question of punishing the indiscipline of 'one individual' (what of the 61 other Labour M.P.s who to their credit refused to vote for the official motion endorsing the hydrogen bomb? what of the 113 M.P.s who signed the motion which earned official rebuke?) and 'not a crisis of policy'. So equally in the preceding major crisis of 1931, when the dominant right-wing leaders of the Labour Party, MacDonald, Snowden and Thomas openly went over to the Tories, Transport House mythology could only 'explain'—and still to this day treats—that historic crisis as the mysterious defection of 'three individual leaders' who suprisingly and inexplicably 'stabbed the party in the back'. They dared not face the crisis of policy, and had to take refuge in the shallow head-in-the-sands philosophy of 'individuals'. They dared not face the fact that the action of MacDonald and his colleagues was only the culmination of their whole policy, of the whole system of MacDonaldism, of the whole right-wing system of tying the Labour Party to capitalism and imperialism, which the Communist Party had correctly criticised from the outset and warned where it would lead, and which Transport House had used all its machinery of discipline to impose in the name of 'loyalty' and to suppress the healthy revolt of the rank and file—just as they are using the same methods today to seek to impose a still more extreme version of the same system. But today the left is far stronger.

The Lesser MacDonalds

So the lesson of the crisis of 1931 was never faced. MacDonald departed, but MacDonaldism remained. The lesser MacDonalds, the Attlees, Morrisons and other pupils and disciples of MacDonald carried on the same essential system to still more extreme forms. MacDonald had purged the Communists from the Labour Party. Attlee and Morrison proceeded to purge the supporters of the Popular Front, Cripps, Bevan and later, Pritt, and an extending array of left fighters in the Labour Party. What began as expulsions at the bottom ends as expulsions at the top, when those who took

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part in imposing the former purges find themselves purged. MacDonald had sought and failed to draw the Labour Party openly into the camp of Toryism. Attlee, Morrison and Bevin carried through the 'bi-partisan' policy of the partnership of the official Labour Party with the Tory Party in prosecuting the most extreme reactionary policies of capitalism and imperialism, the colonial wars, the American military alliance, the surrender of Britain to become an American military base, the rearmament programme and austerity for rearmament, the preparation of atomic war, Nazi rearmament and now the support of the hydrogen bomb. With every step along this road to ruin the revolt has grown. Where in the early stages (Marshall Plan, American military occupation of Britain, Atlantic Pact, the rearmament programme) the Communist Party was almost alone in voicing opposition, the fighting demands voiced by the Communist Party have since been taken up by millions. The battle against the wage freeze was fought and won. By the time of the Nazi rearmament plan, the majority was already won for opposition at the Scarborough Labour Party Conference; and only a machine trick to switch mandated votes prevented that majority being registered and compelling a reversal of policy. This battle has now advanced to a climax over the hydrogen bomb. The right-wing leadership decided to strike at all costs before the left should win. They struck at Bevan, as the most prominent spokesman of dissent, in order to strike at the entire left. They have taken steps to add close on half a million to their machine vote at the coming annual conference in order to provide for the possibility of losing, not only the constituency labour parties, but every union whose vote is cast on the basis of any measure of democratic consultation of the membership. They would rather disrupt the entire party than surrender to the left.

Mr. Bevan and 'Bevanism'

The personal role of Aneurin Bevan is only a symptom of this deeper battle. Mr. Bevan is not the cause, but the reflection of the advance of the left. The right-wing leadership delight to point out the 'inconsistency' and 'ambiguity' of Bevan's political position, since he has agreed with the right-wing policy on fundamentals, and therefore, they claim, the only question is one of personal refractory behaviour and indiscipline, and not of policy. This is an attempt to befog the real issue. Of course the political platform of Bevan, insofar as he has stated any, is shot through with inconsistencies. If it were not, he would never have reached the high position in the

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leadership of the Labour Party, the very prominence which gives such national and international significance to his expressions of dissent. The special role of Bevan in this whole period since his resignation in 1951 has been, not that he has formulated any consistent left policy, but that he has sensed the advance of the deep left currents in the labour movement, and has found the means within the general framework of the official right-wing policy, to raise opposition on particular issues partially echoing the left demands, and thereby to dramatise the mood of dissent around his person.

Symbol of Dissent

In this context the 'inconsistencies' of Mr. Bevan take on their own consistency and logic, in which it would be as out of place to look for a coherent leadership of the left in his utterances as to under-estimate the significance of his measure of opposition. Thus he did not oppose the rearmament programme; he sponsored it in parliament. But he resigned in protest against the budgetary health charges which were imposed by Mr. Gaitskell in the name of the rearmament programme; and he subsequently criticised its practical execution so sharply as to become identified in the public mind with opposition to it. He did not oppose the American military alliance or occupation of Britain; but he voiced the deep hostility of mass feeling to American agressive policy. He did not initially oppose the plan for Nazi rearmament; but he called so emphatically for delay of fulfilment until further negotiations with the Soviet Union as to become identified with opposition to it. He supports the manufacture and eventual use of the hydrogen bomb; but he criticises the official Anglo-American and right-wing Labour strategy of using it first, and in consequence stands out, nationally and internationally, as the most prominent public voice in Britain and America opposing the hydrogen bomb war strategy. In this way he occupies a key political position at the present moment, in spite of, it might almost be said because of his inconsistencies, in the present transitional stage, whatever the future may hold. He fulfils the role, not so much of direct leader or spokesman of the left policy towards which millions of the rank and file have moved or are moving, as shown in conference resolutions, but as the public symbol and reflection of this left revolt reaching also into the upper circles of the leadership. Hence the right-wing leadership has struck at Bevan in order to strike at the entire left; and the entire left has correctly rallied to the defence of Bevan, irrespective of differences of outlook, against this attack, in order to defeat the right-wing disruptionist offensive.

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Capitalist Camp's Alarm

There is no concealment of the alarm in the capitalist camp over this developing situation in the labour movement, and over what the advancing left revolt and the sharpening battle of left and right may portend. Even at the same time as the principal Tory organs applaud and hound on the right-wing offensive, exhort the leadership to be firm, and warn against the dangers of compromise, they simultaneously express anxiety and apprehension at what the future may hold. *The Times* finds the right-wing offensive 'desperate, but logical'; the *Observer* emphasises 'a difficult and dangerous situation'; the *Sunday Times* notes 'disturbing aspects'. All warn that 'Bevanism', *i.e.*, the left revolt, is not necessarily identical with Bevan and may not be solved by his expulsion. '"Bevanism" is not entirely the creation of Mr. Bevan' (*Observer*). 'Mr. Bevan may moulder in the grave. . . . Bevanism will go marching on' (*Daily Telegraph*). Through all these apprehensions runs the anxious recognition of the role of the Communist Party in the advance of the left revolt, and the fear that the growing co-operation and unity of the advancing progressive sections in the trade unions and the Labour Party with the Communist Party may transform the whole character of the labour movement and end the cosy bi-partisan co-operation of Toryism and right-wing Labour as the foundation of Britain's present political system. The *Observer* emphasises that, however necessary expulsions may be, a non-communist 'left wing' is indispensable in the Labour Party 'in order to prevent left wingers from drifting away to Communism'. The *Sunday Times* (March 13) releases its spectre from the bag:

> The hidden distant danger to the country is this, that from the division of Labour a new Left-wing crypto-Communist party might arise, and in the long run might become the alternative Government, the nature of our system being to squeeze out the middle party.

In other words, to translate this apocalyptic utterance into comprehensible political terms, the unity and victory of the left, communist and non-communist together, might transform the present right-wing-dominated Labour Party into a real militant United Labour Party, drawing in all sections, freed from right-wing leadership, and advancing to the defeat of capitalism and the victory of socialism. The conceptions of the Communist Party long-term programme, *The British Road to Socialism*, are beginning to seep through into current political discussion.

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Lessons for the Left

From this developing situation the lessons for the left are inescapable. The first essential is unity of all progressive sections, communist and non-communist, in the trade union and labour movement to defeat the right-wing disruptionist offensive and secure the reinstatement of Bevan and others expelled. Second, to combine this fight with the fight for a change in policy, for the reversal of support of Nazi rearmament and the hydrogen bomb, and to rally the widest united support around a militant programme reflecting the aims of peace and of socialism in order to make possible the defeat of Toryism at the coming elections. Third, such unity, to become fully effective, needs to advance from the present stage of already strong co-operation in industry and the trade union field, and partial informal co-operation, despite bans, in the political labour field, to the abolition of the whole system of undemocratic bans and denial of democratic rights and choice of delegates in the Labour Party, so that the Labour Party can include, as its founders intended, all sections of the working class, and representation in the Labour Party can become a true reflection of the wishes of the organised workers.

The Left and the Communist Party

The fourth and most important lesson follows from the whole character of this right-wing offensive as the offensive of a centralised political machine directed to over-ride the undoubted wishes of the majority of the membership, and deriving its strength from the fact that it confronts a scattered and dispersed opposition, without common leadership, programme or organisation. This situation demonstrates the iron necessity of an organised political party of the working class fight for socialism, that is, of a mass Communist Party, drawing in all advanced progressive elements, strongly based in industry and the mass organisations of the working class, and thus capable of defeating the right-wing machine and capitalist policy in the labour movement, and leading forward the battle of the united working class and of the widest sections of the people to the victory of socialism and peace. In the final analysis this is the deepest lesson of the present crisis of the Labour Party, no less than of the entire present political situation, not merely for the long-term future, but for the urgent present.

March 20, 1955. R.P.D.

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ELECTION PROSPECTS

D. N. PRITT, Q.C.

THE possibility of an imminent election is being widely canvassed following on the crisis in the Labour Party and the announcement of Sir Winston Churchill's impending retirement in April. Speculation has turned on the prospect of a summer election—or possibly in the autumn. In any case a general election must come in the next 17 months, and it may come at any time selected by the Tories between now and October, 1956 (part of the working of our democracy is that the side that is 'in' is entitled to pick a moment at which electors may be caught by some passing advantage and give a verdict which—however speedily they may regret it—will be called 'the will of the people' for four or five years thereafter, in war or in peace).

The Labour Party must, of course, have a programme for this general election, and its officials and leaders are no doubt at work on one now. It is a matter of vital importance and interest to the rank and file of the party, and to the public in general, what this programme will be. There are many things they want to see in a programme which may determine their lives (and their deaths) in the next few years. The policy that all sections of the Labour Party want, or at least ought to want, to see proclaimed in this programme is, of course, a Socialist policy, sound and honest, and likely to win enough votes to provide a working majority. Let us see, firstly, what sort of a policy the right-wing Labour Party leaders are likely to frame, and what the prospects of success with such a policy are; and, secondly, what sort of a policy the rank and file really want, and what prospects that offers.

Firstly, what of the present, right-wing, leaders? We can make only too good a forecast of the policy they would like to put forward, by examining what their policy has really been in the last few years and months. It has been, of course, and still is, to a far greater extent than is commonly realised and certainly to a disastrous extent, a Tory policy, what is called in modern imported jargon 'bi-partisan'. It is bi-partisan to a degree which often makes it difficult for them to present that appearance of conflict in Parliament and the country which is essential to preserve the illusion that the 'party system' is functioning.

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In foreign policy, in the widest sense of the word, there is scarcely even a pretence of difference from the Tories. The central essential policy of lining up with the U.S.A. against the U.S.S.R. and other Socialist countries is not just accepted from the Tories: it is rather a joint product (not a cartel, so to speak, but a combination). On the indefensible, anti-Soviet, anti-Socialist, treaty-breaking, suicidal policy of rearming Germany, there is 100 per cent. support of Tory policy, even to the point of securing an arithmetical majority at the last Annual Conference by what may be charitably called an 'adjustment' of votes of a kind which, if employed in commercial transactions, would put any firm out of business; and, after all, it was the Labour Government which established an important part of the joint policy by accepting the American army of occupation, which carried with it the clear implication, admitted in Parliament by Ernest Bevin, that should it suit the Americans to start a war we should be brought into it without any option to 'contract out'.

On the general imperialist line of policy, particularly in relation to Malaya and Kenya, there is again no difference. On Quemoy and Matsu (the Chinese off-shore islands that Dulles has made the possible flash-point of a war explosion), again no difference. It is true, indeed, that Mr. Attlee 'heroically' rejected any idea of our being involved in war for Chiang Kai-shek in various speeches he made in the early part of the year, while the *Daily Herald* headline on the Labour Party's resolution of February 23 ran 'Not a man, not a gun from Britain'. But there was no real difference there, for Sir Winston Churchill had on the same day made it clear that 'there was no question of our being involved militarily' in that area. And on the indisputable fact that Formosa is an integral part of China, Mr. Attlee in practice stands, and as leader seeks to stand his party, side by side with Churchill for withholding Formosa from the Chinese People's Republic. Indeed, the same Labour Party policy statement actually suggested that 'Britain should be prepared to contribute to an international naval force for this purpose', which was more than the Tories had concretely suggested. (One can only admire the foresight of Mr. Neville Chamberlain, who was responsible for establishing the principle of paying a salary to the Leader of the Opposition; but one wonders why he set it lower than the Cabinet Ministers' scale.)

And what is the right-wing Labour Party leaders' position when it comes to supporting the series of policies of

(1) arming N.A.T.O. forces and the new German Army (if and when they get it) with 'tactical' atom-weapons,

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(2) using atom and hydrogen weapons at once, in any war, whoever starts it, without waiting for even the threat of their use by any possible enemy, and

(3) deciding to manufacture the hydrogen bomb ourselves—a decision announced to have been carried into effect before it was publicly announced or proposed?

Here, again, there is no Labour opposition, beyond the usual parliamentary argument that what the Tories were doing could and would have been done better or differently by the Labour Party. And when this triple policy leads any schoolchild of average intelligence to the conclusion that, inasmuch as the use of the hydrogen bomb will destroy us all—and the British first of all—and even the preparation for its use will make us all bankrupt, the only possible course is to embark on immediate negotiations for the prohibition of the use of such weapons, and for the general reduction of armaments, with the supposed enemy—who is clamouring with embarrassing vigour and sincerity for such negotiations to be begun—you will still find that the right-wing Labour leaders follow, not the intelligent schoolchildren, but the Washington-ridden Tory policy of refusing to support the demand for a ban on the use of all atomic weapons.

Even on matters of home policy, where one might cherish hopes of finding greater divergences, the picture is in substance the same. The fight for higher wages and better conditions, and against long hours, is largely carried on in the industrial field; and the right-wing leaders, side by side with the right-wing trade union leaders, stand aloof and give no support to trade unionists fighting these battles for themselves, by the use of the strike—and fighting very successfully.

That is the sort of policy that right-wing leaders have given us so far. What is to be their policy for the election? Unless the rank and file of the Party, and general public opinion in the country, forces a change, the right-wing leaders will keep to their old lines, not just because they are chained by their own past but also because these are the policies they believe in and want to force on their party.

What do the right-wing leaders hope to achieve at the General Election by their present policy and attitude? Six months ago, the answer to this question must have been that they hoped for nothing, and had nothing to hope for, since the Tories then seemed to be riding on a wave of prosperity, however spurious and transitory; and in the absence of any real difference of policy between the leaderships of the two parties, little change in the voting could have been expected. But, more recently, with the economic position worsening, the right-wing leaders have begun to calculate that they may

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get back into office, without repenting, without fighting on the main issues, without declaring any Socialist policy, just on the 'swing of the pendulum'.

At such a period, with so much at stake at home and abroad, those who think in terms of pendulum swinging may find themselves swinging instead. Their conduct is as frivolous and unworthy as that of the Tory Press, which sees no more in the present disputes in the Labour Party than a hope of extra votes for the Tories, or as that of Sir Winston Churchill, who talks of the danger of God 'wearying of mankind'. This is not a time for an orchestra of Neros fiddling more or less the same tune, with no fire insurance policy.

The moment is in truth a great one, offering tremendous opportunities, and calling for courage and initiative. Not only is there a deep revolt in the Labour Party ranks and a great awakening of public opinion in the country, but it is also clear that the adoption of a Socialist policy now by the Labour Party will lead to a great revival of faith and enthusiasm in the ranks of the Party, to victory at the General Election, and consequently to a real start on the road to a Socialist Britain.

What do the rank and file want? This we can realise clearly from the trend of events at Labour Party and Trade Union Conferences, and in Parliament too. The strategy and tactics of the right-wing leaders have become ever more and more a system of deciding what *they* want, and then 'Shepherding' or forcing through Conferences small apparent majorities by log-rolling, back-stair discussions, block-votes, cajoling unions to break their mandates, and similar anti-democratic devices, whilst the actual composition of the Parliamentary party, and its behaviour, are influenced by coaxing selection conferences, refusal to endorse left-wing candidates, expulsions and threats of expulsion. The idea of carrying out the policies which the rank and file obviously want is far from the minds of these manipulators.

There is, surely, little doubt in the minds of any serious observers that the great majority of the Labour Party membership today wants at least:

No rearmament of Western Germany;

An end of colonial wars, and a more enlightened colonial policy in general;

No war in any circumstances over Formosa;

The abolition of atomic and hydrogen weapons, and general reduction of armaments; and, in any case,

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Negotiation with the U.S.S.R. to see how far we can get by agreement on these points;

A stronger fight on wage and other industrial issues;

A forward and generous policy on housing, pensions, and social services generally, of a sort which cannot honestly be offered in existing circumstances without a substantial reduction of armaments to supply the necessary finance; and, lastly,

In general (if the right-wing leaders will forgive the use of old-fashioned phraseology), a Socialist policy.

If those are the wishes of the conscious Labour masses, what does public opinion in general demand? This lends itself rather less precisely to estimate or to statement; but again, I think that few observers will deny that public opinion is at present profoundly for peace; it wants nothing to do with anybody's wars, and would fight for nothing except the defence of this country if attacked (an event which it rightly believes is extremely unlikely). In line with that, it, of course, wants the abolition of atomic and hydrogen bombs, negotiation for reduction of armaments, no rearmament of Germany, and a positive general move in the direction of peace.

Thus, we are truly at a great moment. If we let our right-wing leaders go on as they are doing, we shall have a Tory government, Tory policy, and war: or, if by chance the pendulum swings, a Labour government, a Tory policy, and war—saving always the intervention of a Labour Party reorientation, reversing Tory policy and avoiding war. But if we strike out a new line, and go into the General Election with a genuine policy of the sort that most Labour Party supporters thought they were voting for in 1945, we shall arouse tremendous enthusiasm in the mass of the movement. It will be the moment for which they have been waiting. In all their organisations, in the Divisional Labour Parties, in the trade union branches and trades councils, in the workshop committees, in the Co-operative Societies, such a policy will rally all their forces, organise and consolidate their resistance to false policies, and send them into the General Election in the real spirit of battle. With such a stimulus, they will win a real victory, and give us a Socialist government, a Socialist policy, and peace.

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Sicilian Workers :

Renato Guttuso, one of Italy's foremost painters, is a member of the Central Committee of the Italian Communist Party. There is an Exhibition of his paintings on view until April 5th at the Leicester Galleries, London.

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by Renato Guttuso

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FOUR-AND-A-HALF PER CENT.

A Note on the Rise in Bank-Rate

MAURICE DOBB

A RISE in Bank-rate has traditionally been the main indirect instrument for combatting a tendency for wages to rise to a 'dangerously' high level—what the *Economist* calls one of 'the monetary regulators that are vital for the health of a free economy'. In gold standard days a rise in bank-rate (backed up by appropriate financial manœuvres to 'put the market in the Bank') was the classic method whereby the Bank of England protected itself from a loss of its gold reserves (from an outflow of gold to abroad in consequence of an 'unfavourable' balance of payments). The rise of Bank-rate, it was held, would raise interest-rates generally, thus discouraging business-borrowing. The check to investment, with a consequential decline in economic activity and in employment, would continue until wage-rates, costs and consumption had been sufficiently 'deflated' to bring imports and exports once more into line.

After the abandonment of the gold standard by this country in 1931, this traditional automatic mechanism (crisis in external balance of payments—gold outflow—rise in interest-rates) fell into disuse. In fact, interest-rates were deliberately lowered in 1932 by government and banking policy, and an era of 'cheap money' set in. An important part in the recovery of investment and of general activity in the 'thirties (especially the building boom of the middle 'thirties) was commonly attributed (rightly or wrongly) to the low interest-rates of this period. At any rate, unemployment was still extensive; and so capitalism had little to fear at the time from lack of an instrument for keeping wages under control. During the war, compulsory arbitration (and a 'pegged' cost-of-living index number) kept wages in check; and the 'low interest policy', sponsored by Lord Keynes, was deliberately pursued with the aim of cheapening the cost of government war-time borrowing. It was when this policy was continued by the Labour Government into the post-war years, in conditions of export-drive and 'full employment', that economists and business men once more began to whisper among themselves about the need to recreate a margin of unemployment, in order to 'restore flexibility to the labour market' (in the current euphemistic

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phrase). With the coming of the reign of Mr. Butler, the Bank-rate started to stage a come-back as the 'impersonal' instrument of capitalist policy.

It is noteworthy that the first defeat for the post-war cheap-money policy, which in retrospect was a turning-point in more respects than one, was a product of the premature attempt at sterling-convertibility in 1947 (forced on this country by the terms of the American loan-agreement). The sharp drop in the gold and dollar reserve in the summer of that year, following the rush to turn pounds-sterling into dollars, brought defeat to the Dalton-policy of trying by monetary action to push the long-term interest-rate below $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and ushered in the Cripps austerity era, which *inter alia* allowed interest rates to rise again to 3 per cent. and over—their first upward move for many years.

Again, seven to eight years later, there is reason to suppose that the pressure on the gold and dollar reserve (which has shown a drop from $3,013 million in July, 1954, to $2,681 million in February of this year, and at the rate of $100 million a month during February) came as a result of recent moves *towards* convertibility. For some time U.S.A. influence has been exerted towards the removal of 'currency restrictions on trade' by making the £ sterling freely convertible once more into all other currencies including the dollar. This would involve the liquidation of the so-called 'sterling area' as a currency bloc (and hence as a preferential trading area), and has been for some time a focal point of Anglo-American antagonisms. About a year ago a partial move was made in this direction (officially defended in this country as a move to strengthen sterling by making the holding of it more attractive), by an extension of what is known as the 'transferable account area' (countries between which sterling held by non-U.K.-residents can be freely transferred). It seems likely that this change considerably increased the risk of 'leakages into dollars', and that to a large extent it made sterling owned by non-residents of the U.K. convertible *de facto*. At any rate, towards the end of last year the unofficial market for sterling in those countries showed pronounced weakness. To strengthen the unofficial sterling-rate, the body known as the Exchange Equalisation Account is said to have operated on the market, buying any surplus holdings of sterling that were being offered. This meant supplying dollars to such holders in the 'transferable account' countries as were wanting to turn their £'s into dollars; and accordingly involved what the *Economist* has called 'technical convertibility introduced by the back door'.

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A further factor in the worsening situation has been those old acquaintances the 'terms of trade' (ratio of export prices to import prices), which after a period of friendliness turned recently against this country once more. The index of import prices in January of this year stood at 104 as against 98 in March, 1954 (1954 as a whole =100). It had risen 2 points in December and a further point in January, while export prices remained unchanged; thereby adding something like £100 million on to the U.K.'s annual import bill. There has also been talk of a reduction of export volume (which for most of last year was maintained by enhanced demand from some West European and Commonwealth countries, despite the adverse effect of the American 'recession') due to potential exports like motors being sucked into the home market by inflated home demand. In so far as the foreign payments deficit may have been aggravated by fresh 'inflationary pressures' at home, this has clearly come from the spending of boom profits and capital-market gains and not from wage-earners' consumption (the official money-wage index having risen over last year by 5 points as did the cost of living index, but *no more* than the latter). At any rate, in the *Economist's* opinion (February 26, 1955) the earlier half-per-cent. rise in Bank-rate had been a 'complete failure' as regards the exercise of 'any disinflationary effect'. (The *Westminster Bank Review* called it an 'amber light', adding that 'amber lights have been jumped by over-eager drivers before now'.)

It is too early as yet to form a judgement as to how deep-rooted is this re-emerging 'balance-of-payments crisis', or about the precise effects of the rise of Bank-rate to $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. So far as the internal situation is concerned, the rise is clearly aimed at reducing mass consumption rather than at curbing investment. There has even been talk in some quarters of Budget concessions in favour of the latter in case business-investment is adversely affected by the monetary stringency; and perhaps this is the reason why 'after an initial set-back the Stock Exchange has been recovering joyously' since Mr. Butler's action (*Economist*, March 5). On the other hand, a rise in the Public Loan Board's charges is sure to scale down local authority investment, in particular building, and to this extent adversely affect employment and the vaunted housing programme. More generally, the Bank-rate change may be said to mark a final stage in the return (for the time being at least) to reliance on the traditional instruments of *laissez-faire* capitalism—what the *Economist* (February 26) chooses to call 'atmospheric controls' (by

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contrast with 'specific regulations administered by bureaucratic agencies'), rooted in 'the cardinal principle of economic policy: that industry and the markets . . . will do much better in deciding how any general cuts . . . should be distributed than will any gentleman in Whitehall'. *The Times* is, however, less optimistic than the complacent doctrinaires of the *Economist*. In addition to hints of a decline of demand abroad (*e.g.*, the possibility of renewed import-restrictions in Australia) it suggests that home industrial output may have 'stopped increasing and levelled off since last autumn' (*The Times*, March 10). Seeing that the British economy is so tied to American coat-tails, much may depend on developments in the American economy which some are comparing to 1928 if not to 1929.

FROM BANGKOK TO BANDUNG

IVOR MONTAGU

THIS month will see assemble, on April 18, at Bandung, Java, Indonesia, the first conference of Asian and African states—the first ever.

It is not only important because it is an Asian meeting, that is, a meeting of independent states from that continent where dwells considerably more than half the human race. But because it is even wider. Not Asia for the Asians but—unkinder cut—Asians showing a sense of common responsibility for people with similar problems elsewhere. In Africa, to be precise. The bailiwick that all the old-fashioned imperialists, from Mosley to Bevin, counted on to provide for years to come the goods and exploitation against which victims otherwhere were likely all too soon to kick. Bandung certainly makes West Bromwich look old-fashioned.

'It is going to be an extraordinary meeting', says Nehru. 'The mere fact of our meeting is of the highest significance. It is the first time that such a meeting is taking place. It does represent, rather unconsciously or subconsciously, Asia and Africa coming to the forefront. I do not know whether this idea was present in the mind of the original sponsor of this conference wholly. But, because the proposal was made at the right time it fitted into the spirit of the times.'

The five Colombo countries—Burma, Ceylon, India, Pakistan, Indonesia—invited 25 others. From eastern Asia: the Chinese People's Republic and Japan; from south-eastern: Cambodia, the

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Philippines, Democratic Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos and Thailand; from the central mainland: Afghanistan and Nepal; from the nearer east and Arabia: Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Yemen, Iran, Jordan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia; from Africa: Gold Coast, Egypt, Liberia, Sudan, Central African Federation, Ethiopia and Libya. All countries with at least an independent or quasi-independent state structure and Prime Ministers. The objects stated are: (1) to promote goodwill and co-operation between Afro-Asian countries; explore and advance common interests and establish further friendly relations; (2) to consider social, economic and cultural problems; (3) problems of nationalism, racialism and (horror of horrors) colonialism; (4) to consider the contribution that can be made to world peace and co-operation.

To quote Nehru again (speaking in the Indian Parliament on February 25): 'In the conference there are completely different ideologies and political and economic structures, so to say, completely different. There are countries in this conference which are aligned to this Great Power bloc or other Power bloc and there are countries like India and Burma and Indonesia and others which are not aligned with any.' They have, these countries, continued Nehru, 'certainly much in common and also much not in common'. And he calls it 'an experiment in co-existence'; some are inclined this way in relation to power blocs and some the other, but they are 'meeting together, meeting in a friendly way and trying to find what common ground there is to co-operate in the economic field, cultural field or even political field'.

It is this, of course,which terrifies Mr. Dulles. If it were an ideological conference he would not be nearly so worried about it. For what links together all these diverse countries participating is not something that they have got in common, but something which they are doing without. They are not including the United States.

For the first time, the U.S. is outside—not of an ideological bloc, its own dividing of the world has made that a commonplace—but outside a large conference of all views in a given area, that says, that dares to say, we'll consult without your permission. Imperial powers need not apply. And you, U.S., for all your bunk about the free world and your responsibility, when you're in Asia, that's all you are, imperial. So, on the mat.

The imperial lion is getting pretty shabby of late, and used to this sort of thing. Over Anzus it had to take it. Now the bald eagle has to watch its head. No wonder Dulles calls Bandung, venom-

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ously, 'a new doctrine of segregation . . . the peoples of Asia . . . segregated from the peoples of the west'. All right what if it were? The segregation of law-abiding folk from imperialist aggressors who have no business poking their hogs' snouts and atom bombs into other people's gardens is not such a bad 'new' sort, anyway. Better than keeping Marian Anderson out of the Washington theatres.

The acceptances to the Bandung conference are not yet complete. The number of nations agreeing to be represented already numbers 22. When the idea of the conference was first canvassed—at the first Colombo Powers meeting (Ceylon, April, 1954) for a long time the hack journalists, accustomed to take their tripe from State Department, and, at one remove, Downing Street handouts, the wish-fulfilment tribe, wrote that its dreamer-up, Indonesian Premier Sastroamidjojo, would fail. He was embarrassing India, they wrote. Ceylon, or at least Pakistan, could be counted on to say no. These wishes failed to materialise. In due course nobody was embarrassed, everybody was enthusiastic, and so many governments accepted that Dulles had hastily to reverse the boycott he at first counselled to his satellites, and shove Thailand and the Philippines forward in order to be able, rather undignifiedly and however indirectly, to poke his disruptive nose in at all.

It is not at all accidental that the host to the conference is to be Indonesia, and its originator was the Indonesian Premier. For Indonesia is an extraordinary place. It exemplifies almost every possible diversity. (Its motto is: unity from diversity.) So diverse are these features it might well be expected—and the imperialists have not only hoped but helped—that it would fly centrifugally to bits at the least push. It is situated on islands, hard to connect and administer. The islands are utterly different—ranging from Java, so full of ricefields and people that it is more densely populated even than Belgium or Britain, to jungles like Sumatra and Borneo. The people have a variety of religions, elsewhere militantly exclusive and evangelistically aggressive—Muslim, Christian, Buddhist and Hindu. The people are a congeries and conglomeration of every race and appearance that migrated in waves southward from the mainland through the millenia, and stuck and inter-breeded here, because the Pacific would let them go no further. There are even special fissiparous features, like small trading so completely in the hands of Chinese, that those serve as a sort of Jew-bogey for reactionary agitation among the backward poor. The islands have

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no common history, save the accident of inclusion in the empire of the Dutch (who did not allow any to be taught), and even no common language, save a sort of pidgin Malay full of ingrafted Dutch and other European bastard adaptations.

Yet never was there such a determined, patriotic, solid, centripetal and resolute nation as Indonesia today. A common fate and a common market under Dutch rule built them as a nation and a common hatred of the Dutch born of that rule, a common pride in not being Dutch, welded them and holds them together.

The Dutch left when the Japanese came. The Indonesians fought against the Japanese, and then against the Dutch again when they came back. They won their independence with blood, they are nobody's fool, and they will not let anyone take it from them again. A Dutch near-monoply of foreign trade, Dutch and U.S. virtual monopoly of what little industry exists, continued Dutch clinging to West Irian (what we call West New Guinea, Papua), the insolence, colour-bar, gunrunning and sabotage of Dutchmen who remain in the main islands, corruption of political stooges (particularly among the Masjumi the Muslim feudal landlord party—and the splinter Social Democrats) by Dutch, British and U.S. interests, serves not to disrupt the state, but simply to maintain a series of more or less violent running-sores that act as perpetual warning for unity, and against yielding to the blandishments of imperialism.

Hence—a stronger, and growing, confidence in the need to oppose colonialism and support peace, not only at home, but wherever the forces so irritating at home may be active elsewhere.

It was certainly appropriate that the second Colombo meeting from which the Bandung invitation was issued, held also in Java, at Bogor, and of which the wish-fulfilmenters confidently predicted that it would agree nothing (they relied on the Ceylon and Pakistan Premiers, of course) nevertheless came through with: backing for the Geneva decisions and opposition to outside interference against them; agreement with Indonesia on West Irian; support for Tunisian and Moroccan independence; opposition to experiments with nuclear weapons.

Against this, Dulles and Eden's show at Bangkok looks like a nudists' conference. An 'Asian pact' with 'Asia' made up of three subsidised stooges? And the poverty of this muster only emphasised by the fact that the two more who *would* have come—Chiang and Rhee—they did not dare bring because their presence would only have augmented the scandal. And a sixth—Japan—wouldn't come despite all the payments.

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When Dulles returns, a feted hero welcomed for his courage, to tell the Washington bulb-flashers of his daring excursion to the 'front-line of the free-world' and of how he has met and talked with 'people longing to preserve their freedom', this may serve to thrill the afficionados of the horror-comics, but Little Asia, knowing he means Thailand, Taiwan, Saigon, Laos, Cambodia and Pakistan—six 'states' without a voter amongst them—and while there never spoke to anyone more 'popular' than a cocktail-waiter, can only laugh and laugh and laugh. But they know very well the barefaced aggression which lies below the comic surface.

Eden doesn't talk quite so silly, his periods are the classics with a frog in the throat, his straight back and creased trousers contrast with Dulles' epitome of Uriah Heep, but whom (besides those at home), whom, that is, in Asia and Africa, does he think he's fooling by his references to peace, resisting aggression, and humanity when behind the lavender tie and braces his hearers can see the Malayans and the Kikuyu?

The meeting at Manila accomplished nothing to settle the still unsolved contradictions of imperialist policy. Dulles could not even yield to Eden's sophisticated demand to word his pact 'against aggression'. Congress would not allow, he said. It must be 'against only Communist aggression'. Other aggressors—full steam ahead.

Bangkok failed worse. Here is what *New York Times* Sulzberger wrote before it (February 23):

> If S.E.A.T.O. is to survive its first conference must be a pronounced success. For this new alliance is opposed by external forces of great strength. . . . And within itself S.E.A.T.O. contains profound weaknesses. . . . Even in working papers for this meeting the alliance has yet to demonstrate any real commonalty of purpose or policy. . . . Disparate attitudes must be adjusted if Western influence, in terms of either economy or political philosophy, is to endure.
>
> One major problem to be faced is economic. To impress Asian neutralism it must be demonstrated that S.E.A.T.O. has a probable value in terms of living standards as well as self-protection. . . . The present bilateral type of thinking and planning must be welded together. . . . Likewise the complexity of military arrangements must be harmonised.

From the ideal to the real. Five days later (February 28), after the conference, Sulzberger headed his next article 'South-East Asian Treaty Organisation is Just An Old-fashioned Military Alliance'. And he bewailed that it 'is no tightly-knit organism . . . there is no agreement. . . . No international command structure has been created nor is one contemplated. . . . Nothing comparable to the

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N.A.T.O. system of economic analysis and co-operation has been elaborated. . . . Britain and the U.S. contend that . . . outside aid should be brought in bilaterally. . . .* Even on the internal security aspect of S.E.A.T.O.—determination to resist subversion—there is little group planning. The Big Powers clearly do not place confidence in the discretion of their smaller allies and fear information leaks'.

Bangkok a fiasco? In one sense, in the sense of achieving anything solid to live up to its trumpeting as an alternative for Asia, yes. In another, and a very real sense, that which causes the Chinese to warn us so seriously of its perils, no. It represents another, calculated, premeditated stage further on the ruthless Dulles road to war, Sulzberger gives this, too, away: 'S.E.A.T.O. materialised with American support for one simple reason: from now on, if aggression develops in South-East Asia, Washington can "act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes".' The U.S. Constitution forbids the President, who is Commander-in-Chief, to go to war without consent of Congress. The special Congress resolution on Taiwan (Formosa) has untied his hands to go to war with China, whenever and wherever he pleases, on that issue. Congress endorsement of S.E.A.T.O. enables him to start it wherever else in Asia he now likes. No more restraints of the Constitution, with behind it bamboozled, bellicose, but still nervous U.S. public opinion. No more restraints of keeping up appearances at the United Nations—that has served its purpose once in Korea, is too much of a strain even to pay lip-service to any longer, and can be cast aside. No more dragging alliances—Dulles-of-the-thin-lips did not *want* out of S.E.A.T.O. any co-ordination if the price he would have to pay was consultation, he merely wanted a constitution-evading fig leaf behind which to be rampant and free of restraint. By Manila, by Bangkok, the American war bullies are carefully building up a fiction by means of which every time they grab a loan for greed or lust of domination, they hope to look, at least from a distance, as though they were doing it from a sense of duty and fidelity to engagements which, though they hope it will be forgotten, nobody has asked them to undertake. And, of this cheap romance, Eden is acting as lickspittle publisher.

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*In December Dulles and Stassen said that it was 'time to grapple with the long-range problems of Asian economic development'. Military and political policy in the cold war are in 'good shape' but economic policy 'weak'. In the middle of February, George M. Humphrey, Secretary of the Treasury, said that the 'overall trend of spending abroad' was on the decline and expenditure on 'economic aid to Asia in 1956 would be about $585,000,000 compared to $500,000,000 in the present financial year'. (*New York Times*.)

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Asia understands this very well, if too many in Europe and America still do not. We have the habit of Kiplingesque thinking. It seems to us a part of nature that Britain and America should career over Asia, as over everywhere, why should not the pink people paint the map pink? The Empire-spreader walks the earth naked, except for war paint, and press, radio and labour bosses alike conspire to stifle the small voice of truth that would exclaim 'Why, he has no excuse'.

But the Asian looks at it differently. 'Why are you here, Mr. Dulles? Are you going to help us? With what, and do we want it? At what price? Is it one we are willing to pay? Against communism? How do we know that what you call communism is not the independence we want?' And Dulles can only reply, in Laos, in Cambodia, in Saigon, in Taiwan, in Manila, in Tokyo, and in Bangkok: 'I am here, and wherever else I like, by right of my guns'.

That is why a lot of Asians, and some others, are meeting in Bandung. As an 'experiment in co-existence'. To see if they *can* co-operate. To see if they can do without—a certain Mr. Dulles. And if they can, it may be infectious.

FROM THE *LABOUR MONTHLY* OF 25 YEARS AGO

ECONOMIC CRISIS OF 1929-33

The present world economic crisis, bringing an unheard-of wave of poverty and starvation to hundreds of thousands of working-class homes in every capitalist country, is a striking confirmation of the analysis of the present system that was made by the Communist International. All the chatter about the possibility of capitalism having reached a stage when it would no longer be troubled with crises over the problems of markets, competition and price, except in the world market in rivalry with other capitalist powers; also the theories of the wonders that 'organised capitalism' would be able to accomplish; all the airy-fairy talk about America having entered on a tremendously long period of prosperity that showed the way to every other country; all the reformist nonsense of the Second International and the Amsterdam International about rationalisation leading to increased standards of living and increased employment for the working class, have been blown sky high.

From *The Struggle Ahead of Us*,
by Harry Pollitt, April 1930.

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NOW ISN'T THAT JUST TOO BAD?

ANDREW ROTHSTEIN

IN recent weeks the millionaires' press has been trying to break its own records in lurid, almost hysterical predictions about internal prospects in the U.S.S.R. 'A reversal of policy', 'heavy industry once again', 'Soviet consumer must tighten his belt', 'Soviet people short of bread', 'crisis in Soviet agriculture'—and, of course, the invariable 'Kremlin struggle for power'. The raw material for this sparkling display of press fireworks—not entirely novel when one looks back over the years since 1917, if the truth be told—was drawn from three sets of reports in the Soviet press: the annual report of the Central Statistical Department on economic results of the preceding year (published on January 21, 1955), the resolution on agricultural problems adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party which met from January 25 to 31 (together with the speech of Khrushchov on that subject) and the proceedings at the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. from February 3 to 9.

As usual, the material published in the Soviet newspapers did in fact reveal certain shortcomings, difficulties and problems of organisation and management which are being encountered in the Soviet Union. But what evidently is inaccessible to the intelligence of the capitalist press commentators—no worse in this respect, however, than their predecessors on many occasions since 1917—is that the particular difficulties being encountered now are nothing like those which had to be overcome in 1918, for example, or in the period of rebuilding after the British and other invading armies had relieved Russia of their presence (1921-25), or during the period of industrialisation (1926-29) or Socialist reconstruction and reorganisation (1930-34). The difficulties of today are difficulties of *growth* just as those were, it is true (though the commentators of those days were as blind to that particular aspect as the Press lords' 'diplomatic correspondents', 'students of Soviet economy' and 'experts on Soviet affairs' are today). But the growth is on an enormously higher level, made possible precisely because the difficulties at earlier stages were overcome; and it is qualitatively, not merely quantitatively, different from the growth in earlier periods of Soviet development. In plain language, whereas in earlier stages up to 1937-38 the growth was towards Socialism, since then—and more precisely, because of the

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dreadful setback caused by the war, since 1948-49 (when the pre-war economic levels were generally overtaken)—the growth is towards a Communist society.

In the course of the effort to build Socialism, the Soviet workers and peasants have not only made their country well able to defend itself, but have provided it with a flood of machinery to open up natural resources and raise living standards almost beyond comparison with Tsarist days. One's mind runs to such vivid contrasts as: the black bread, tea, herrings and boiled buckwheat which were the staple diet of 90 per cent. of the people before the revolution—and the meat, butter, canned fish, white bread one sees on factory canteen tables and in any peasant cottage today: the infant mortality down from 270 per 1,000 in 1912 to 40 in 1954: the 8-hour day instead of 10 or 11 hours, the immense variety of trade union powers in industry, the management of the vast collective (co-operative) farms by committees and officers elected by the members: the disappearance of illiteracy, the expansion of the student body from 100,000 to 1½ millions, the increase in the number of theatres from under 100 to nearly 1,000, the giant circulations of both Russian classics and foreign (like Shakespeare, Dickens, Balzac or Robert Burns)—and all in one generation.

But they want more. It was not only Marx, in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875), Engels in his *Anti-Dühring* (1878) and Lenin, in his *State and Revolution* (1917) who foresaw that Socialist society, coming into existence by the conscious effort of the working class after overthrowing capitalism, would bear many inherited blemishes—but would develop the productive powers so greatly and enlarge man's horizon so widely that Socialist society would grow into Communist society. British Socialist pioneers understood that too. William Morris wrote that 'Socialism can only be a transitional condition of society': Communism was simply the 'necessary development' of Socialism: during Socialism 'people would be getting rid of the habits of mind bred by the long ages of tyranny and commercial competition' (1887). So also Blatchford understood that 'Practical Socialism', in which all the means of production would be taken from private owners and run by and for the people, and during which 'there would be wages paid, and probably the wages of managers would be higher than the wages of workmen', was 'a kind of preliminary step towards ideal Socialism', in which 'there would be no money at all, and no wages . . . every citizen would take what he or she desired from the common stock'—we might,

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said Blatchford about these two stages, 'with more reason call them Elementary and Advanced Socialism' (*Merrie England*, 1892). So also the Social-Democratic Federation, Fabian Society and Hammersmith Socialist Society, in their joint May Day manifesto for 1893—the text drafted by William Morris and amended by H. M. Hyndman and Bernard Shaw—looked forward, through the community taking over from the capitalists 'the means of transport, the means of manufacture, the mines and the land', to its being able to end the wage system, sweep away class distinctions, and eventually establish 'national and international Communism on a sound basis'.

This is just what the Soviet people and the Soviet Union's Communist Party have said in plain terms, again and again, that they are after. But this requires, ever and again, casting a housekeeper's, or good gardener's, watchful eye over their domains and efforts, to see that everything keeps in step, in its right proportions, and that mistakes inevitable in human endeavour don't grow into misfortunes. They have been doing this in the last six months, and the results are reflected in the documents mentioned earlier.*

Heavy industry must grow faster than consumer goods industry, as it has always done—and contrary to the opinions of some superficial economists. Otherwise, how could it produce the machinery needed, not only for equipping more consumer goods factories and producing other social amenities, but also for defence, for the expanding needs of the other Socialist countries for heavy industrial equipment—and for replacing its own correspondingly quickening wear and tear?

But this is not a change of policy: it is a standing policy, and the figures for all recent years—including 1954—prove it. No main branch of heavy industry but produced more (and more than its plan) in 1954 than in 1953—although some sections of these main branches, for the second year in succession, were below their target. Nor does it mean that the 'consumer must tighten his belt'. The big increase in heavy industry output in 1954 did not prevent big increases in output and sales of consumer goods, both manufactured and foodstuffs. And the Central Committee resolution of January 31, 1955, laid down measures to ensure that meat and milk ouput by 1960 should be double that of 1954, eggs more than double and wool 80 per cent. more. What is certain is that the Soviet Government has been vigorously carrying out its policy, laid down in public by the present Five Year Plan in 1952, of doubling its reserves of

*For greater detail, see Russia Today News-Letter, No. 399, to be had from the British-Soviet Friendship Society, 36, Spencer Street, London, E.C.1. 3d., post free.

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all kinds of materials—in case of accidents. But that is hardly surprising in view of American threats, German rearmament and Churchill's idea of 'negotiating' by hydrogen-bomb threats.

In order to provide for the growing population, release a larger number of people to grow things which they can't eat but which are needed for industry (cotton, sugar-beet, flax, etc.), allow for bigger exports and for reserves, the Soviet Union is to increase its output of grain from the average maintained in the last three years—nearly 129 million tons—to 160 million tons a year (of which 60 million tons are to go as fodder). Does that mean there is a 'grain crisis'? How can that be, when nobody shouted about a 'grain crisis' in 1909-13 (average output 79 million tons) or in 1934-38 (average output 94 million tons)? The population has increased—but in nothing like the proportion that grain output increased. More attention, too, has to be paid to the livestock position, which is not fully satisfactory.

The problems of organisation involved in all this require the best available *business* head at the helm—and no one in the Communist Party leadership is the equal of Bulganin in this respect. So he takes the place of Malenkov. Compare the latter's statement on resignation with the six ministries criticised by Khrushchov (in his speech at the Central Committee on January 25) for inefficiency in agricultural and kindred matters, and you will see that one bears out the other. What does a change of job for this or that leader matter, if it is to promote a further big step forward towards Communist society? And this at a time when the target of 'all young people at school to 17' is in fact not far off achievement: and when hundreds of a new kind of technical school have already opened—for brick-layers and spinners and miners and scores of other trades *who have had an education up to Higher School Certificate* by our standards: and when the U.S.S.R. has begun to use atomic power in industry and agriculture on a commercial scale? In other words, when the technical and intellectual foundations of Communist society are actually coming within measurable distance?

So the working class of the Soviet Union thinks, and the Communists who have led it all these years. But the 'experts' and 'students' of Downing Street and Fleet Street think otherwise. Now isn't that just too bad?

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OLIVE SCHREINER: A MEMOIR

MICHAEL HARMEL

OLIVE SCHREINER, South Africa's greatest creative writer, famous especially for her two great novels—*The Story of an African Farm* and *From Man to Man*—was born one hundred years ago, on March 24, 1855. She died in 1920 after a life filled with suffering, ill-health, and noble endeavour on behalf of the oppressed and exploited: the women, the workers, and the non-white peoples of South Africa. She was born at Wittebergen, a lonely mission station, and her childhood was spent moving from one lonely outpost to another as her father (a missionary)—whose kindness of heart was greater than his ability to support his family and who later forsook the mission field—moved from one centre to another in search of a livelihood. Naturally, under such conditions there was little formal schooling for the children, but Olive Schreiner was a voracious reader. Mill's *Political Economy,* the philosophy of Spencer, the poems of Goethe: all these and many other books far above the comprehension of the average child, she somehow managed to obtain and read. At an early age she had to fend for herself, and her first writing was done while she was working—for £30 a year—as a governess on a farm in the Eastern Cape Province. She was 20 when she had completed *The Story of an African Farm.*

Out of her meagre earnings she struggled to save her fare for a passage to England, her great ambition being to study medicine and qualify as a doctor. At last she managed to save enough, and in 1881 she sailed for Britain. In her portmanteau was the manuscript of *The Story of an African Farm.* Olive Schreiner was poor, unknown and without influence. Nevertheless, her talent demanded recognition: in 1883 *The Story of an African Farm* was published.* The novel was soon acclaimed as a masterpiece by discerning critics, and it has gained the affection of steadily growing numbers of readers in many countries in the 70 years which have passed since then.

It was not only the story and the people of her first book that stirred literary and intellectual London of the eighties. It was, still more, the daring orginality of her ideas which at once placed this young governess from the Karroo in the advance guard of European thought. She spoke out with passionate sincerity and eloquence for

*Under a male pseudonym (Ralph Iron) for the first edition.

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equal opportunities and rights for women. Effortlessly she swept aside the cobwebs of Victorian convention and ignorance that swaddled the thought of the time. Here was a fresh, clear young voice from Africa, and all that was best in London listened to it. She arrived there in 1881, unheralded and unknown. She came home to South Africa in 1889, it has been written, 'as one who had attracted to herself the wise, the great, the famous, and—what she really set store by—the love of the poor'.

Olive Schreiner registered at the Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh, but continued ill-health forced her to give up the idea of becoming a doctor. From her return to South Africa in 1889, Olive Schreiner's life was one continuous battle for health as she moved from one Cape village to another in search of relief from the crippling attacks of bronchial asthma that pursued her to the end of her days. She died at Matjiesfontein in 1920. Her great novel *From Man to Man* was published in 1926, after her death. It was the book she herself loved best. She spent 40 years revising it.

Olive Schreiner was never amongst those writers who seek to escape from reality into an 'ivory tower' isolated from life and society. Her books themselves enter passionately into the lists in the cause of human freedom. Her pen and, despite her illness, her energies, were always at the service of those who fought for justice in the struggles of the day. Many of those struggles are very much alive today. The bullies and the tyrants may still feel the lash of her fearless pen. . . . *The Story of an African Farm* is full of moving appeals for equality of rights and opportunities for women; it was the cause that then lay closest to Olive Schreiner's heart. But she was far from being a narrow 'feminist', seeing only the 'women's problem' in society. She was the courageous champion of the oppressed, the weak, the exploited, wherever they might be.

When she returned from England to the Cape, she found local politics increasingly dominated by that astute and unscrupulous financier Cecil Rhodes. Her keen perception quickly saw through the demagogy of Rhodes to the bellicose imperialism and greed which led him into increasingly aggressive policies towards the Boer Republics of the north and the African territories beyond and repressive policies towards the non-white population in the Cape Colony itself. Rhodes, at the head of the British South Africa Chartered Company, was conducting an incredibly brutal and shameless war against the African people in Mashonaland (now known as Rhodesia). In her propagandist novel *Trooper Peter*

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Halkett of Mashonaland, she pitilessly exposed the cruelty and barbarity of the invaders.

During the South African War of 1899, Olive Schreiner was one of the small minority of English-speaking South Africans who boldly and unhesitatingly denounced the aggression of British imperialism against the Boer Republics. She did not approve of the reactionary attitude of the republics towards their African populations, but she understood clearly the nature of the war, provoked by Rhodes and British capitalism to seize the wealthy Witwatersrand gold mines. In many articles and pamphlets published at the time she demanded self-determination for the Afrikaners, and she was a close friend of Emily Hobhouse, whose great work for the Boer Republics will never be forgotten. In Cape Town in July, 1900, Olive Schreiner made one of her rare appearances on the public platform to denounce, amidst prolonged and enthusiastic applause, the savage cruelties being committed by the imperial troops against the republican civilians.

> Every farmhouse which British soldiers are burning down today is a torch lighting the British Empire in South Africa to its doom,

she cried, and it is not hard to imagine the effect upon an audience of that frail but dynamic personality filled with indignation and wrath. Too ill to attend other meetings held for same cause, she sent written speeches which were read from the platform.

The crude exploitation, the incessant insults to human dignity and the vicious discrimination against the African people in her day in the so-called 'liberal' Cape Colony, shocked her deeply sensitive nature. The years immediately before 1910 were filled with negotiations between politicians of the four Colonies and Whitehall over the formation of a Union of South Africa, and the terms and conditions thereof. Then, as now, the principal issue in South African politics was the so-called 'Native Question'. Olive Schreiner boldly entered this controversy with her pamphlet *Closer Union* (1909). Looking towards the coming federation of the colonies, she declared unequivocally:

> I am of the opinion that where the franchise is concerned no distinction of race or colour should be made between South Africans. I believe that an attempt to base our national life on distinctions of race and colour as such will prove fatal to us.

But the Liberal Parliament at Westminster passed the South Africa Act of 1910—the present constitution—which marred the Union from birth with the ugly stigmata of the *herrenvolk* ideology.

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Olive Schreiner hated war. 'If the use of force is ever justified, it is justified in fighting against social oppression', she wrote. But the brutal slaughter of imperialist wars filled her with horror. She wrote of imperialism as a 'deadly disease which increases its virulency in proportion as it is extended over ever more distant spaces more diverse multitudes till it becomes the death shroud of the nations'.

'Oh Emily', she wrote to Emily Hobhouse in October, 1914, 'the worst of war is not the death on the battlefields, it is the meanness, the cowardice, the hatred it awakens.' When she was well enough she attended anti-war meetings in London, and spoke with contempt of those timid speakers who seemed to be concerned with 'winning' the war rather than ending it. When Bernard Shaw, who had supported the war, wrote a letter to the *National* admitting that Britain and France too, would have invaded Belgium, she commented bitingly in a letter to Havelock Ellis: 'Bernard Shaw can speak the truth sometimes'.

She was bitterly opposed to the war of intervention against the young Socialist Soviet Republic, the advent of which in 1917 she had warmly welcomed. In 1920 British dockers struck work and refused to load a ship with arms for the Polish war of intervention against the Soviets. 'I am so glad', she wrote to a friend, 'the labour men wouldn't load that ship with guns for the Poles to kill the Russians with. I think this last affair with the Poles is the wickedest thing in the war.'

Olive Schreiner was a revolutionary by nature and intellectual conviction. She hated cruelty and violence more than anything, but at the same time understood well that no people could win freedom without fighting for it. In 1912 she wrote to a friend:

> I am not so anxious for women to get the vote as that they should keep on fighting for it. It is the struggle that educates. A degraded or subject race or class gains more from a fight for freedom than by having it given to them.

During her first visit to Europe in the 'eighties, she moved among the most advanced and progressive and socialist circles. She was an intimate friend of Eleanor Marx. In a message read to a Cape Town meeting in 1906, she referred in glowing terms to

> Karl Marx, the great German socialist and leader, who died only 27 years ago—a man of transcendent mental ability. . . . Yet this man chose to devote his whole life and his mighty gifts only to developing those lines of thought which would result in benefit to mankind, and he chose poverty and exile—poverty so extreme that he, with his highly cultured wife and

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their young children, was often exposed to extremes of physical want—rather than resign the services of his great ideals.

She had a firm grasp of the basic conceptions of the labour movement, and there can be no doubt that but for her ever-present illness she would have played a more active part in it. She wrote a message to a demonstration of shop assistants in Johannesburg encouraging them to continue their efforts towards organisation. 'A just return to the worth of his labour should be made to the worker', she wrote. 'The man who lives and grows wealthy on underpaid human labour is essentially a parasite.' That was written in 1905. There is not a word which the trade union movement would not do well to ponder today, 50 years later. She saw too, the role which colour prejudice might play in disrupting the labour movement:

> Our labouring class is divided sharply from the employing class by the line of colour. . . . Any attempt on the part of our labouring class to better its position or resist oppressive exactions, being undertaken mainly by men of one colour against men of another will immediately awaken, over and above financial opposition, racial prejudice, so that even those white men whose economic interests are identical with those of the black labourer, may be driven by race antagonism to act with the exactors.

To Olive Schreiner, the victory of the Russian Socialist revolution spelt the dawn of a new era for humanity. Her husband wrote in his biography of the 'almost unbounded admiration of Lenin' which she expressed to him, to Havelock Ellis and others. 'She looked upon Lenin', wrote Cronwright, 'as incomparably the greatest—if not the only great—man the European situation had produced, and as a statesman of outstanding genius.'

Nothing is more embarrassing to the leaders of bourgeois respectability than those men and women of genius who refuse to accept their conventions and their gods, who look forward with daring revolutionary vision, to a better future. Neglected and persecuted in their lives, after their death their memory is either defiled and be-spattered; else their names are 'sanctified' while their real living thought is distorted or committed to oblivion. Olive Schreiner's memory has been subjected to both these processes. *The Story of an African Farm* has too great an international reputation to be buried, but the rest of her work, especially her magnificent post-humous novel *From Man to Man,* is almost inaccessible. We need have no fears, however, that malice can ever damage, or deliberate neglect annihilate the work of Olive Schreiner: it is part of the inheritance of the people of our country, and nothing is more certain than that they will rediscover it for themselves.

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Book Reviews

SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

Science in History, by J. D. Bernal, F.R.S. (968 pp. Watts. *42s.*)

THIS big book, nearly 1,000 pages, might be thought to be a compendium of the history of science, and this is a function it brilliantly supplies. But it is only incidentally a history of science. Its main purpose is social. It is, as the title implies, a study of the place of science in history. This is a subject on which Bernal holds strong convictions, and he has given us a highly original and personal book written for the most part with great freshness and power.

More than that, the book is a call to action, and this gives it its special quality. It is right out of the academic class. Like Bacon's *Great Instauration,* or Tom Paine's *Rights of Man,* or Robert Owen's *New View of Society* it has a prophetic ring. It analyses the present crisis of mankind, explains the danger and the opportunity, and calls upon us, not only to agree or disagree, but, if we agree, to act. The historical subject of the book is man's gradual technical mastery of his environment from the Old Stone Age on; the consequent transformation of his society; the emergence of theoretical science in this transformed society; the first groping efforts to apply science to technology; and finally the quickening pace of the application of science to productive and organisational problems. Now science has penetrated every department of human society so thoroughly and so intimately that hundreds of millions must perish if its activities cease or are misapplied.

This historical sketch, which is characterised by keen insight into particular problems as well as by a refreshing capacity to take a synoptic view of a vast field, leads to an analysis of the position of science in the contemporary world. Bernal, as we all know, has not only won high honours in theoretical science but is distinguished for his brilliant application of science to the problems both of peace and of war. He has also had exceptional opportunities of studying the way in which science is organised in different parts of the world. Why is organised scientific research still confined to a few centres of population? What proportion of public funds are available for research? What proportion of the available funds goes to constructive purposes? What atmosphere of hopes or fears attends the progress of science in different parts of the world? To Bernal it is clear that in the capitalist world the main drive behind science is the creation of weapons of destruction in the hope of maintaining things as they are,

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while in the socialist world the main drive is for the application of science to construction with a view to make things very much better than they are. The conclusion is that science should be taken out of the hands of the capitalist monopolies which exploit it for private profit, brought under public control and harnessed to the goal so well described by Stalin in his last public statement: 'the securing of the maximum satisfaction of the constantly rising material and cultural requirements of the whole of society through the continuous expansion and perfection of socialist production on the basis of higher techniques'.

Such is the argument that underlies this big book. It gains in force by the scope of the exposition. It will be studied all over the world and will prove an encouragement and help wherever science is already consciously applied mainly to constructive purposes. In our own country and in others in which history has driven science mainly into destructive channels it will help the revolt and the escape into a freer world.

It remains to say a few words about the organisation and presentation of the material. The plan of the book is admirable and is easily seized by the Parts, Chapters, and Sections into which it is broken up. Five Maps and eight ingenious Tables facilitate the comprehension of the long exposition. The Bibliography is copious, well-arranged, and up to the minute. Those who wish to use the book as a work of reference will find themselves well served by the Indices.

Inevitably there are some weaknesses to be found in the execution of such a vast undertaking. One is a tendency to repetition of which one becomes aware towards the end of the book; no doubt the lack of time for continuous composition, of which the author complains, is responsible for this fault. Then, as the author again warns us, in such a huge subject some parts are bound to be better than others. The more surprising thing is how well the level is maintained. Out of 24 sections, for instance, devoted to the ancient world, where I am most at home, I found myself inclined to quarrel with only two and everywhere instructed and entertained. The book as a whole is a solid and lively exposition of a great theme and both publisher and author deserve our congratulations and thanks.

B. FARRINGTON

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MARXISM VERSUS THE SOOTHSAYERS

Marxism and the Irrationalists, by John Lewis. (142 pp. Lawrence & Wishart. *8s. 6d.*)

WE have very few books which get to grips, in a fundamental way, with the legion of idealist philosophers who are spreading unreason and superstition in our universities and on the radio. John Lewis has gone a long way towards filling that gap in this competent, workmanlike and thought-provoking book. The first requirement of a book on Marxist philosophy is clarity. Dr. Lewis writes in an admirably lucid and attractive style. Any worker who has read, say, Stalin's *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* should have

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no difficulty at all in following the argument, which is logically and conveniently arranged in short sections. The second requirement of such a book is militancy. Here Dr. Lewis has made a notable advance on his pamphlet of 11 years ago, *Marxism and Modern Idealism*. Except for one or two sentences that seem rather ambiguously phrased—there is an example on page 22—the battle against idealism is waged consistently and with gusto. Those sections which explain the class basis of this battle, and the connection between the decay of bourgeois philosophy and the decay of monopoly capitalism, are among the best things in the book. 'Bourgeois civilisation can no longer cope with its own problems', Dr. Lewis writes, 'therefore man and nature, human society and economics, must appear incalculable. If reason reigns, then bourgeois civilisation has to admit its own impotence and bankruptcy: hence reason must be dethroned'.

Combining polemic with exposition in a way that is in the best tradition of Marxist writing, Dr. Lewis shows that, contrary to the views of certain ministers of religion, broadcasters and journalists, modern physics has not destroyed matter. For matter is not co-terminous with solidity. 'However tenuous and non-solid matter is found to be, it does not cease to be matter'. Equally effective is the discussion of the extremely interesting question of levels of motion of matter. Dr. Lewis has some stimulating things to say about this, showing—with life and human thought as examples—how the qualitatively new level is based on and subsumes the old, whose elements 'by entering into the new synthesis, themselves become something new'. Timely broadsides are fired at all the fashionable and slightly-less-fashion-

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able trends in bourgeois thought today: supernaturalism, subjectivism, positivism, pragmatism, and their reflections in natural science, economics, politics and popular literature. All the prophets and soothsayers, witch-doctors and oracles of our day —Polanyi and Ayer, Broad and Dingle, Baillie, Eliot and the rest— are systematically confuted. Dr. Lewis does not mince his words. Where his opponent is guilty of intellectual dishonesty, he says so. To Labour Party members in particular I would commend the discussion of the philosophical beliefs of Keynes and their influence on Labour Party economics. This book engages the enemy on one of the most important sectors of the class struggle. Let us hope it will be followed by the large-scale work which Dr. Lewis is singularly fitted to give us.

PETER FRYER

HOMES TO LIVE IN

This Housing Problem, by Alec Johnson. (120 pp. Lawrence & Wishart. *5s.* paper, *8s. 6d.* cloth.)

THOUSANDS of working people live in homes over 80 years old—often damp, rat-infested, falling apart. No words can convey the heartache, ill-health and broken family life caused by these conditions —nor the fear that when they are at last offered a Council place, the rent will be beyond their reach. This is no new problem created by the war, but is rooted in capitalism itself. Financiers, land speculators, building contractors, materials manufacturers and builders merchants—the same vested interests—have been at work from the days of 'Housing for the Industrious Poor' right up to the present day with its Rent Act: ('All our housing for working people has been provided only insofar as it has been a profitable investment').

This useful book makes the case for increased subsidies and lower interest on housing loans amply and factually. It advocates outright nationalisation for building materials, but Direct Labour schemes to supplant (rather than taking over) the private building contractors. Many aspects of the housing programme put forward would be no more than carrying out Labour's post-war programme but in fact Labour's failure in 1945 to take strong measures against private interests led to a come-back by these same profit-makers, on almost every count. Thus Johnson's book shows the need for a People's Government — 'Housing, ever improving . . . will be ours in the future, when the people come to power'. The next edition might well include an index, for it is a book to study and refer to. JOE BENT

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covers have a story to tell. In the fund list we find: 'Three R.E.M.E.s', 'Gunner Lieut.', 'Socialist Soldier', 'Progressive Airman', 'Socialist Signalman', 'Vigilant R.A.F.', 'Ack-Ack', 'A.T.S. Officer', 'Radio Mechanic', 'Wren', 'Eight of the Boys'. They come from B.L.A., B.A.O.R., C.M.F. and finally a large sum from 'Servicemen in India', with *'congratulations on the part played in the great people's victory in the General Election. In the critical period ahead, your role will be of even greater importance.'* I like to think that some amongst those 'Servicemen in India', those 'Eight of the Boys', are still with us in the fund list under their Civvy Street names.

I know many ex-service lads are among the circulation-builders. But the circulation-raiser I want to spotlight this month was still a schoolboy when war ended. An electrician, this *young Londoner* sells 20 copies each month. His main concentration is in his trade union branch, where he sells ten. He found the Midget L.M. very useful for preparing the ground there. The rest he sells at work. Recently he changed his job; but he wasn't giving up his target merely because he was now among new faces. So he just asked, and sold the lot. A good motto: why not ask? For consider the *Welsh reader* who, having no freedom to move around the factory, decided to approach his nearest workmates. Five of them agreed right off to take L.M. regularly. They only needed to be shown the magazine and they became readers for the asking. I wonder how many readers who find L.M. indispensable themselves have yet never realised that is should be equally indispensable to brother trade unionists and those they work with? We will always help by circularising the quarter-sized Midget L.M., which gives a clear impression of the character and contents of the magazine at a glance, or by sending a particular number as specimen. Why not use the forms on the back cover?

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